

In Which Everything is Okay by the-singular-peep

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Summary: The night had lasted so, so long, and Eleven was so, so tired. But she had done it. She had closed the gate, and now she was safe again. Safe with Hopper, and Joyce, and Mike, and the party. Safe with her family. [IN WHICH EVERYTHING IS OKAY SERIES. COMPLETE. PART 4/?. PT3: "IN WHICH AN OLD HABIT IS REVISITED."]

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November 7, 1984. Wednesday.

Hopper had to carry her out.

"I'm so proud of you, you did it," He would say as he cradled in the lift, her in his arms and going in and out of consciousness. The gate had been closed, but it had taken a tremendous amount of strength - more than Eleven had thought was possible from herself. And now she was really feeling the effects of that used strength and was not able to keep her brain focused and coherent. The amount of nausea Eleven had felt while closing the gate was overriding all of her senses now, and as soon as they stepped off the lift she pushed against Hopper blearily and vomited onto the tile. She knew Hopper was talking at that point, but wasn't able to piece together his words. She couldn't think as her stomach lurched and she was sick on the ground once more, but she couldn't feel it much, either. She felt numb, and the world felt fuzzy and unclear, like she wasn't really all there. Briefly in the back of her mind, Eleven pondered if maybe she wasn't, if maybe part of her was stuck somewhere, maybe in the upside down, but then she felt her knees give (She hadn't realized she was standing on her own now) and felt Hopper catch her under her arms, and she drifted off.

It was worrisome, Hopper could admit that. He piles her into the car carefully, setting her into the passenger seat and lightly shutting the door before climbing into the driver's seat himself.

He tried not to acknowledge the fact that tears had begun to form in his eyes.

Joyce barely heard the knock on the door, she was so overtaken with joy to have her boy back.

They had returned from the cabin - From Hopper and Eleven's cabin - and Jonathon had carried Will to his room. Will insisted he was fine, and that he could walk, but Joyce could see how

weak he still was. Pale and sweaty, with disoriented eyes and the hints of a fever playing on his cheeks and deep in his eyes. But he was smiling, and she was smiling, and everything was calm for now, and so it was okay.

Calm. That was such a foreign concept. And yet, here she sat, curled up beside the bed with her head lying on the mattress and her hand tracing circles on Will's peaceful cheek, the picture of *calm*.

Jonathon sat up beside Will, and his hand was petting the younger boy, too. Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and Max were sitting around the table, obviously wanting to talk but too afraid to.

Steve was pacing the kitchen.

Nancy was looking out the window.

It was quiet.

And then - And then the doorbell rang. Joyce took nearly five minutes to get to the door, but was overcome with relief as she did so.

Hopper carried Eleven in, and the girl was sleeping. Her thumb was in her mouth, but no one commented, and Joyce quickly helped Hopper get her settled on the couch.

She didn't comment on the tears streaking Hopper's face, either.

Mike was at Eleven's side in an instant, crying and holding her hand.

"She'll be fine," Hopper told him, but he sat at Eleven's feet and kept a hand on her, too.

Joyce came in with a warm damp washcloth and began working at the blood on Eleven's face. It was a lot of blood, and it was still coming in a slow trickle from her nose, but she wiped at it anyways. She carefully took the thumb from the girl's mouth and wiped it down, too, then carefully cleaned her lips. Gosh, the blood was all down her neck and was staining her teeth. Joyce

thought briefly of trying to rouse Eleven, to help her bathe and get more comfortable because she had done good, so good, and needed to be warm and cozy and safe, but she thought better of it.

She wiped the remaining blood from her face, and let her sleep.

The kids all slept at her house that night, after calling their respective parents, and Joyce did not mind. Eleven stayed on the couch, and Mike fell asleep sitting up on the floor leaning on it, her hand clasped in his. Hopper slept at her feet, his head leaned against the back cushion. The others were strewn across the floor, all curled up together, not wanting to leave each other even for a moment. Will had insisted to go in there, too, curling up in the floor with his friends.

At some point in the night Eleven and Mike had ended up in the circle, too. Joyce and Hopper had somehow managed to curl up together on the couch. Jonathon and Nancy were wrapped in each other behind the couch.

Steve didn't sleep.

Steve stayed up all night and watched his kids, and he couldn't seem to bring himself to care that Nancy was with Jon, just that his kids were alright.

And they were happy.

When El comes back after Closing the Gate, she is exhausted. She had been giving so much strength, and had felt so nauseous and weak that Hopper had to cradle her like a baby and keep her still to take her out because she could not walk and she could not keep her stomach settled. It takes two weeks to get her strength back.

During that time, El remains at the cabin, and barely moves from bed. They spend the night at the Byers's the night Of, because Eleven was too out of it to even imagine climbing into the car.

So they stay the night, and Eleven sleeps through breakfast. (Mike has wrapped her up 3 eggos in saran wrap and hands them to her

when Hopper roused her to go home.) Hopper wakes El carefully at nine am, and she very slowly opens her eyes. Hop lifts her and carries her out, but while he is distracted and she is asleep in his arms, Mike kisses her forehead and sneaks the eggos under her arm. When they arrive Home, it is Home now, El is a little more awake. Her Eyes are up, but her body is weak - she sleeps the whole car ride home, and Hop has to help her into the house. He starts her a shower after setting her onto the couch, commenting and trying to be light about how she looked.

She can't find the strength to smile, but she likes it.

He helps her into the bathroom and makes sure she has something to hold onto before leaving her, leaving the door open. He has to return, however, to help her undress, simply because she cannot and when she starts to unbutton her jacket with shaky hands she cannot and begins to cry, and so Hopper helps her and she is grateful.

He stays right outside the door as she showers, or at least is there when she gets in and when she gets out, and she has to lean against the wall as she washes the makeup off and scrubs old shampoo into her hair. She breathes in the scent of musty strawberries and caramel that the shampoo leaves her with, and inside she smiles. *Home*. She gets out of the shower and wraps the towel around her, and then calls for Hopper because she knows she cannot steady herself enough to dress. He helps, and it does not make her feel awkward even though this should be *privacy*. He tries not to notice the deep cuts and bruises that litter her thin form.

She is dressed in a pale blue long sleeved pajama shirt with dark blue stars and matching pants; an outfit that Hopper found for cheap at the thrift store, when he picks her up and helps her to bed. She loves that outfit; its one that makes her feel like she is safe and *home*. While she was washing, he has changed her sheets and put on 2 extra blankets and turned on the lamp. It is cozy and warm and not too bright when he tucks her in, and she likes it. She likes to be out of the makeup and gel, because now she feels like herself. Not Eleven. Not Jane. But *El*. Her. She is El, because that name reminds her of the compassion in Mike's voice when she was given that name, and she loves it. Hopper sits by her and reads to her until she begins to doze, and then sits with her still. She's not sure if he has even left when she

opened her eyes again at 3 with a fever growing behind her eyes.

Joyce receives a phone call at three PM.

She has sent the boys and teenagers home by one, and now she is sitting beside Will on the couch while Jonathon sits at his other side, and they are watching television. Its warm and cozy, and Joyce is smiling without even realizing it. She loves her family, her sons, her home.

And then the phone rings, and she doesn't even stop herself from scowling.

"Probably Karen, Mike left his socks." She said, rolling her eyes because all she wanted to do was hug her sons, *not* talk on the phone, even if it was her son's best friend's mother wanting to get her son's precious stockings back. But she picks up the phone anyways, and it is not Karen.

It is Hopper.

He talks fast, and Joyce can barely understand what he is saying.

Eleven is hot, Joyce, she's just so hot and I don't know what to do. She's barely even conscious, and I can't get her to drink any water, and whenever she wakes up she's crying. I'm not ready for this, I'm not good enough for this, I need your *help*.

And within twenty minutes Joyce had piled her two sons into her car, Jonathon in the back with Will and making sure the pajama-clad child stays wrapped in ten different throw blankets, and is driving to Hopper's little cabin.

She's just so *tired*. By four Joyce is over and Hopper is not alone at her bedside, and Eleven smiles. She likes Joyce - She's the nice lady who hugged her and petted her in the bath a year ago. But Joyce looks worried. El doesn't know why - the words aren't making sense and all she wants to do is *sleep*. She vaguely recalls when Jonathon, the nice boy with the funny face, comes in and says something to his mother, but he looks like he's laughing, and she picks out the name

"Will" before she dozes again. She wakes up again and it is dark. Hopper is still at her side, and he is petting her and talking quietly to Joyce, who is standing in the doorway.

"No, no, don't worry, Will's doing fine, Hop. He's just asleep, and Jon's with him. I came to check on your little one."

Hopper shrugs, and Eleven realizes that neither of them know she's awake.

"Her fever's just so high, Joyce. Last time she was sick... When it was just me and her, she got to 103.8 and we both thought she was dying. It's already up to 104, and it's just gonna get higher. I don't know if I can do this."

Eleven saw Joyce move to Hopper, and she put a hand on his arm.

"Kid's are tough, Hop. You saw Will tonight. You've seen him every day for the past year and how weak and hurt he seemed. But he always bounced back, and she'll do it too. They'll both be fine before you know it."

Eleven's head throbs then, and she moans, scrunching in on herself.

"Oh, hey, hey, sweet girl, shh, you're okay," Hopper says. Eleven leans into his touch where he's still petting her head.

"Thirsty," She mumbles, and her eyes are already beginning to close.

"Okay, okay, hey, stay up now, we'll get you some water. Joyce?" Joyce was out of the room quickly. "You need to drink, El."

When Joyce returns, El takes two sips before falling back into a feverish sleep.

Joyce doesn't remember falling asleep, and yet here she is. She is very close to the chief, who has his head leaned over from his chair onto the side of the bed, and also to Eleven, who is still cuddled under at least five blankets, when she opens her eyes, and they are both sleeping, too. And then she lifts her head, and she sees that Will is there, also, and he is perched just beside her, sleeping with his head lying across her middle. And then

there is Jonathon, who is at her feet, on the floor, and he is sleeping as well. Joyce reaches forward to her son's forehead groggily, and is pleased to see that he no longer feels warm in the least. She then moves her hand to Eleven's forehead, and smiles, because while she is still hot, she is not so scalding she cannot be touched as she was earlier.

Joyce notices that the cup on the bedside table is also empty, a good sign that Eleven is hydrated, when the girl in question opens her eyes.

"Hey, brown eyes," Joyce smiles, her hand still on her forehead. She brushes a curl from the child's face.

"Home?" Eleven said softly. Joyce smiled.

"Yeah, you're home, baby, you're home. We're all home now."

And then Eleven smiled, and Joyce saw her nodding off again.

"Good."

And they were happy.